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Scanlan's Reviewed

At the start, more than a year ago, it seemed an unlikely enterprise. Boisterous, improvident Warren Hinckle III, the former editor of the free-swinging, muckraking monthly Ramparts, was teaming up to begin a new magazine with two staffers from the sober New York Times—law reporter Sidney Zion and John Leo, who covered the Times's "intellectual beat." First, the three journalists, all under 40, put a bit of whimsy into their venture and decided to name the publication Scanlan's, after a deceased and despised Irish pig farmer whose name they had overheard in a Dublin bar. Then they mixed in some hardheaded business acumen and, with the help of a sprightly prospectus and an astute Wall Street underwriter, sold



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Zion and Hinckle: A switch on the sober and the brash

\$675,000 worth of stock in the new monthly even before they had a dummy.

But in March the magazine itself appeared, and it was clear that something had gone wrong in the mixing. Somehow, Scanlan's first issue managed to combine the sober dependability of Ramparts with the brash excitement of The New York Times. On its cover was a drab reproduction of the canceled check for \$675,000 from underwriter Charles Plohn. Beneath the check, a sanctimonious editorial argued that, unlike other magazines, Scanlan's would be completely independent of outside interests and pressures. "We must be fiercely candid about who owns and controls this new magazine," the editorial began. "Frankly, we don't even know the names of our stockholders."

Stock: That was not the whole truth. While Scanlan's was raising money, Zion called Robert Price, formerly deputy mutual fund called Price Capital Corp., and convinced Price to buy 25,000

shares at \$2 each. And Jerry Ginsberg, the owner of Magna Books, Inc., a paperback-book distributor, has never tried to hide the fact that he is the largest single investor in Scanlan's. "What we really meant," Zion explained in Scanlan's comfortable Manhattan editorial offices last week, "is that we don't know more than four or five of our investors." Most of Scanlan's stock, however, is controlled by four or five investors.

Not that the investors have exerted any editorial influence over Scanlan's. In fact, nobody seems to have exercised much control over the three issues that have appeared so far. Scanlan's depends almost entirely on free-lance writers and its own editors—especially Zion—for contributions. A few pieces, such as Murray Kempton's stinging review of Dean Acheson's autobiography, "Present at the Creation," are strong enough to stand on their own. Documents published in the April issue chillingly detail the case against Lt. James Duffy, accused of killing a South Vietnamese soldier last September. And Zion's own story on Federal Judge Henry J. Friendly—a piece spiked by The New York Times and published in Scanlan's May issue—raises serious questions about conflict of interest throughout the Federal judiciary. But many other articles are badly in need of strong and clarifying editing, notably a rambling "exposé" of how J. Edgar Hoover "framed" Machine Gun Kelly's wife—37 years ago.

Genius: Part of Scanlan's uncertain editing seems to result from personnel problems. Leo parted company from Hinckle and Zion several days before the first issue of the magazine was published. Managing editor Donald Goddard will leave as soon as a replacement is found. Hinckle spends only ten days a month in New York; the rest of the time, he is in Scanlan's West Coast office and printing plant. "Warren," complains one staffer, "creates a Götterdämmerung atmosphere in which he will go down as the misunderstood genius."

The magazine, Zion reports, has been selling between 75,000 and 80,000 copies an issue but will have to sell more than 110,000 before it begins to break even. In an effort to boost circulation, Scanlan's last week began its first newspaper advertising campaign, presenting itself as the magazine for skeptical readers ("You trust your mother," ran the headline over the ad, "but you cut the cards"). But unlike Ramparts, which attracted attention to itself with explosive exposés, Scanlan's has not yet created a public scandal, an unhappy condition for a muckraking magazine. Zion was hopeful that a story in the May issue which suggested that Sen. Edward Kennedy might have intervened in the investigation of a Boston stock fraud would create a stir, but other publications ignored the article. "That says to me we're not respected," says Zion. So far, Scanlan's has not earned that respect.

—LEE SMITH